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RESTORING HISTORY

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With the stroke of a brush, a team of Chicano muralists started a movement in 1973 when they painted the "Historical Mural," the first mural in Barrio Logan's Chicano Park. Now, with help from a \$1.6 million state grant, they have reunited to restore their original artwork almost 40 years later.

"It's been real exciting to come back," said San Diegan Salvador "Sal" Barajas, who, with his fellow artists, put the finishing touches on the mural Thursday. "What I like about this crew is that we work together

quite well. We blend. I feel fortunate to be working with them again."

Barajas and other members of the artists collective Torero of Los Toltecas en Aztlan are part of a larger group working to restore 18 of the park's 72 murals, with one mural left in the effort.

Chicano Park supporters also credit Martin D. Rosen, Caltrans' former senior environmental planner and a major ally of the park.

"He was an integral part in getting this ... long-overdue restoration project finalized," said Maria-Elena Ugalde, the niece of muralist Guillermo Aranda.

The process of restoring the murals — mostly painted on the ramps and pillars supporting the San Diego-Coronado Bridge and Interstate 5 — is lengthy, requiring a week to clean the mural, followed by scraping off peeling paint and adding a new coat of primer. After that, the painting can begin.

The muralists, who met while painting and teaching at Centro Cultural de la Raza in Balboa Park, hope that their work will educate future generations.

"Historical perspective is important," said San Diegan Armando Nuñez. "It doesn't matter where you come from, anyone can identify with history."

